

Appendix A.

Arlington Open Space Committee Annual Reports for 1999, 2000, 2001

**Arlington Open Space Committee
Planning and Community Development
Annual Report for 1999**

The Town of Arlington Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996-2001), prepared by the Arlington Open Space Plan Committee and published in 1996, recommended the establishment of a standing committee of citizens and representatives of town agencies involved with open spaces to implement the goals, objectives and actions outlined in the Plan. Town Meeting approved creation of the Open Space Committee (OSC) and the first members were appointed by the Town Manager in 1996.

Since then, representatives of several town entities (including the Park and Recreation Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Redevelopment Board, and the Departments of Planning and Community Development, Public Works, and Human Services) and concerned citizens have been meeting almost monthly to exchange ideas and discuss ways to further protect the town's natural resources and enhance appropriate uses of its more than 50 open space and recreation sites.

The Open Space Committee serves an oversight function but does not have direct responsibility for the management of any specific town properties. Its primary purpose, therefore, is to enhance communication among those entities that do have management authority and to raise broad-based community concerns about the planning, care and use of the town's natural resources, which are a major element in our quality of life.

The principal objective of the OSC has been to research and discuss the status, management and direction of the town's open spaces in the very broadest sense, regardless of use (passive or active, recreation or conservation) or ownership/management oversight (various town commissions, boards or departments). The OSC believes that the only way to fully understand the needs and problems of the town's open spaces is to look at them in a holistic way.

During 1999, the OSC participated in the following actions and projects:

- 1) The committee began an extensive review of the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan and is updating that report's itemized list of goals, objectives and actions in anticipation of the next five-year plan starting in 2001. Much progress has been made over the past three years, but two major concerns remain:
 - a) OSC members are especially concerned that the recreational facilities and natural open spaces of Arlington are drastically under-funded for both regular maintenance and longer-term capital improvements.
 - b) Inter-departmental communication and collaborative management of the town's open spaces have improved greatly through the OSC. However, we urge the town to look for other ways to strengthen its commitment to open space needs, including hiring a full-time natural resources professional to coordinate planning and management. This person could oversee existing fiscal resources and also seek new public and private funding sources for the town's public lands, in accordance with the goals of the 1996 and 2001 plans.
- 2) Volunteer land stewardship is a valuable and necessary complement to the town's open space management program. The OSC acknowledges and supports the growing trend of citizens' groups that participate in this important oversight function, including site-oriented groups such as the Friends of Spy Pond, the Spy Pond and Reservoir Committees of Vision 2020, the

Mt. Gilboa Association, the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, and the Friends of Robbins Farm. In addition, many athletic teams, leagues and other sports-related groups work hard to raise funds to improve the playing fields and other recreational facilities. Many businesses and community groups also participate in Beautify Arlington's "adopt an island" and "adopt a bikeway section" programs.

- 3) Lengthy discussions within the OSC prompted several former members to help found the Arlington Land Trust, a private, non-profit organization established to protect open space and environmentally sensitive areas in Arlington through the use of conservation easements and other activities. The Trust will continue to work with the OSC in carrying out the Open Space and Recreation Plan and building a town-wide base of public support for conservation efforts.
- 4) The OSC continues to monitor and work together with related groups and activities, such as Arlington's "2000 by 2000" tree planting program, regional groups concerned with open space policies such as the Mystic River Watershed Association, and the Community Preservation Act and its open space initiatives at the state level. As another example of community collaboration, OSC members helped formulate the Request for Proposals (RFP) that resulted in the study of Spy Pond Shores, under the auspices of the Park and Recreation Commission. The committee will continue to be actively involved in the planning and development of both conservation and recreational uses at the Reeds Brook site off Summer Street, Arlington's Great Meadows (located in Lexington), the Mugar property next to Route 2 in East Arlington, and other significant open spaces in Arlington.

During the year 2000, the Open Space Committee will continue its town-wide oversight of open spaces and its collaboration with other community groups. The OSC will complete its review and analysis of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, including a summary of accomplishments and a report of actual expenses and projected financial needs. The Committee will also assess recommendations for future actions to meet the Plan's goals in order to present an updated five-year plan for approval by Arlington Town Meeting and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs in 2001.

The OSC wishes to thank the following former members who served on the committee during 1999: Barry Faulkner (Redevelopment Board); Carol Kowalski (citizen/urban planner); and Clarissa Rowe (citizen/Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park).

Submitted on January 26, 2000

Open Space Committee Members

Karsten Hartel, Chair

Susan Brent (Conservation Commission)

Roland Chaput (Redevelopment Board)

Bernice Jones (Park and Recreation Commission)

Patsy Kraemer (Department of Human Services)

Ann LeRoyer (citizen/Town Meeting Member)

Alan McClennen, Jr., and Clare Hurley (Planning and Community Development Department)

Oakes Plimpton (citizen/Friends of Robbins Farm)

Mark Shea (Department of Public Works)

**Arlington Open Space Committee
Planning and Community Development**

Annual Report for 2000

The Open Space Committee (OSC) is starting its fifth year in 2001. The Town's first Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996-2001) recommended establishment of a standing committee of citizens and Town agency representatives involved with open space issues to implement the goals, objectives and actions outlined in that Plan. Town Meeting approved creation of the Open Space Committee and the first members were appointed by the Town Manager in 1996.

Since then, representatives of several Town entities (including the Park and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Redevelopment Board, and the Departments of Planning and Community Development, Public Works, and Human Services) and concerned citizens have met regularly to exchange ideas and discuss ways to further protect the Town's natural resources and enhance appropriate uses of its more than 50 open space sites.

The Open Space Committee serves an oversight function but does not have direct responsibility for the management of any specific Town properties. Its primary purpose is to enhance communication and coordination among those entities that do have management authority. In addition, the OSC seeks to raise broad-based community concerns and to advocate for the planning, stewardship and use of the Town's natural resources, which are a major element in our quality of life. The OSC believes that the only way to fully address the needs and problems of the Town's open spaces is to develop goals, procedures and policies in a comprehensive way.

During 2000, the OSC participated in the following actions and projects:

- 1) The committee continued its extensive review of the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan in order to update that report's itemized list of goals, objectives and actions for the next five-year plan, starting in 2001. Much progress has been made over the past four years, but two major issues remain as unmet priorities:
 - a) OSC members are especially concerned that the recreational facilities and natural open spaces of Arlington are drastically under-funded for both regular maintenance and longer-term capital improvements.
 - b) Interdepartmental communication and collaborative management of the Town's open spaces have improved in part as a result of regular OSC meetings. However, we urge the Town to look for other ways to strengthen its commitment to open space needs, including hiring a full-time natural resources professional to coordinate planning, management and fundraising for the Town's public lands, in accordance with the goals of the 1996 and 2001 plans.
- 2) The most critical open space issue facing the Town during 2000 was the announcement of a proposed commercial development on the 17-acre Mugar site in East Arlington. The OSC worked with many other Town entities and citizen organizations to bring this threatened loss of open space to the public's attention. OSC endorsed and Town Meeting approved a warrant article stating the Town's desire to acquire the site in order to protect it as open space. The OSC also raised concerns about the Environmental Notification Form submitted by the developer, especially regarding impacts on wetlands, flooding and traffic in the region. The efforts of OSC and many other individuals and organizations were successful in convincing officials of the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) to require the developer

to undertake a complete draft and final Environmental Impact Review process before any development could proceed. The Town expects the draft EIR to be submitted during 2001, after which further reviews and hearings will occur.

- 3) The OSC acknowledged and supported the growing number of citizens' groups that participate in volunteer land stewardship, including site-oriented groups such as the Friends of Spy Pond Park, the Spy Pond and Reservoir Committees of Vision 2020, the Mt. Gilboa Association, the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, and the Friends of Robbins Farm Park.
- 4) The OSC also continued to work closely on joint concerns with other local groups, such as the Arlington Land Trust and Arlington's "2000 by 2000" tree planting program, and regional groups concerned with open space policies, such as the Mystic River Watershed Association and the Alewife Coalition. The committee regularly discussed specific, sometimes controversial, open space issues, including progress at Reeds Brook, the possible development of cemetery space in Arlington's Great Meadows (in Lexington), the future disposition of undeveloped land around Symmes Hospital, the state's recommended repairs and deforestation of the Reservoir dam, and the future of the Reservoir beach.
- 5) The OSC participated in Town Day for the first time, in September. Displays and materials introduced the committee, the Open Space Plan, and in particular the status of the Mugar site. The results of a short open space survey showed strong support for more and better maintained open space and recreational facilities, and a nearly 95 percent willingness to appropriate additional Town funds to help pay for open space acquisition and maintenance.

During 2001, the Open Space Committee will continue its advocacy of open space and recreation resources, and its collaboration with other community groups. The OSC will complete its review and analysis of the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan, including a summary of accomplishments, and will present an updated five-year plan for approval by Arlington Town Meeting in the Spring. As a result of state approval of the Community Preservation Act in 2000, the OSC will work actively with Town officials and other local groups to take advantage of this new funding mechanism for open space, historic preservation and affordable housing initiatives.

The OSC wishes to thank former member Susan Brent, representing the Conservation Commission, for her service to the committee over the past four years.

Submitted on January 19, 2001

Open Space Committee Members

Karsten Hartel, Chair

Roland Chaput (Redevelopment Board)

Bernice Jones (Park and Recreation Commission)

Patsy Kraemer (Department of Human Services)

Ann LeRoyer (citizen/Town Meeting Member)

Alan McClennen, Jr. (Planning and Community Development Department)

Oakes Plimpton (citizen/Friends of Robbins Farm Park)

Mark Shea (Department of Public Works)

David White (Conservation Commission)

**Town of Arlington
Planning and Community Development
Open Space Committee**

2001 Annual Report

The Open Space Committee (OSC) begins its sixth year in 2002. The Town's first Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996-2001) recommended establishment of a standing committee of citizens and Town agency representatives involved with open space issues to implement the goals, objectives and actions outlined in that Plan. Town Meeting approved creation of the Open Space Committee and the first members were appointed by the Town Manager in 1996.

Since then, representatives of several Town entities (including the Park and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Redevelopment Board, and the Departments of Planning and Community Development, Public Works, and Human Services) and concerned citizens have met regularly to exchange ideas and discuss ways to further protect the Town's open space resources.

The Open Space Committee serves an oversight function but does not have direct responsibility for the management of any specific Town properties. Its primary purpose is to enhance communication and coordination among those entities that do have management authority. In addition, the OSC seeks to raise broad-based community concerns and to advocate for the planning, stewardship and appropriate uses of the Town's open spaces. The OSC believes that the best way to fully address the needs and problems of the Town's natural resources is to develop goals, procedures and policies in a comprehensive way.

Open Space Plan: During 2000 and 2001, the committee completed its extensive review of the Town's 1996-2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan and drafted an Open Space Plan Update for 2001-2006. This document was approved unanimously by Town Meeting in May 2001, and was subsequently submitted to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Division of Conservation Services. The Arlington Redevelopment Board adopted the Plan in June. The six priorities outlined in the new five-year action plan are:

- acquisition of land parcels currently threatened with development or that may be lost as open space if the Town did not acquire them, notably the Symmes and Mugar sites;
- collaborative management of Town open space and recreation resources by Town departments, volunteer friends groups and other interested parties;
- exploration of the state's Community Preservation Act as a source of funding for acquisition of open space, as well as for affordable housing and historic preservation projects.
- research into other funding sources for capital improvement plans and maintenance programs for existing open spaces and recreational facilities;
- increased public awareness and volunteer involvement in the stewardship of the Town's open spaces;
- coordination with the Arlington Land Trust and other groups and individuals to negotiate permanent conservation restrictions on select undeveloped parcels.

Symmes Hospital Site: Voters overwhelmingly supported Town acquisition of the former Symmes Hospital site in the Town election on March 31, 2001; the final vote of Town Meeting will occur in January 2002. The OSC and several of its members participated in the preliminary planning process during 2001. The OSC was asked to appoint an open space representative to the Symmes Advisory Committee (SAC), and it selected Brian Rehrig, an open space advocate, Treasurer of the Arlington Land Trust, and a member of the pre-SAC planning committee. The OSC was also invited to submit ideas and principles to help guide the planning and redevelopment of the Symmes property with respect to open space concerns, and in August the OSC sent the SAC a memo and an annotated site plan outlining various goals and considerations.

Mugar Site: The OSC continues to work with many other Town entities and citizen organizations to protect the open space character of the seventeen-acre Mugar site in East Arlington. The status of the Mugar family's development plans for the site remains uncertain. In July the Conservation Commission cited the need for a new flood study and ruled against the 100-year flood plain level proposed by the applicant under both the state regulations and the town bylaws. The applicant appealed that ruling, and the state DEP has ruled in their favor. Currently the appeal process under the town bylaws is in the Middlesex Superior Court.

Friends Groups: Arlington is fortunate to have a dedicated and active citizenry concerned about the Town's parks and open spaces, and OSC strongly supports their efforts. Volunteer friends groups have been organized for a number of sites, including Menotomy Rocks Park, Spy Pond Park, Robbins Farm Park and Mt. Gilboa. In addition, the Reservoir and Spy Pond committees of Vision 2020 monitor and advocate for those areas, both of which have serious environmental problems that are being addressed by a combination of state and local government agencies and volunteer groups. The OSC and the Conservation Commission have begun planning a new friends group for Arlington's Great Meadows, with participants from both Arlington and Lexington.

Stewardship Program: To provide a framework for the many groups involved in overseeing the Town's open spaces, the OSC is developing guidelines for a Stewardship Program that could be adapted to fit the needs of any group and its site. The goal is to provide support and guidance for citizen volunteers who take an active role in helping to protect and manage public lands.

Other Areas of Concern: The OSC monitors and works jointly with Town officials and other groups on a wide range of open space concerns that affect the Town and its residents' quality of life. Some of the issues that have come before the committee during the past year are private residential and commercial encroachments on the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway; proposed engineering changes to the earthen dam surrounding the Reservoir, as required by the state Department of Environmental Management; proposed development adjacent to the Reservoir, Munroe Brook and Busa Farm in Lexington on the town line; and subdivisions of residential lots and infill development, especially in areas that abut existing open spaces, such as Turkey Hill and Poet's Corner.

Town Events: The OSC again participated in Town Day in September to inform residents about the committee and its activities. Among the display materials and handouts were maps identifying local open spaces, copies of the draft Open Space Plan Update for 2001-2006, and flyers about the Stewardship Program, Community Preservation Act and the Arlington Land Trust, which shared the booth. The OSC also supported Earth Day activities in April and Biodiversity Days in June. The latter is a state-wide program sponsored by state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, which featured local natural history walks and inventories of plant and wildlife species found in Arlington's Great Meadows and the Alewife Reservation.

During 2002 the Open Space Committee will continue to advocate for and collaborate with other local government and community groups on the protection and management of the Town's valuable open space and recreation resources, in accordance with the goals and priorities outlined in the 2001-2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Open Space Committee Members (during 2001)

Karsten Hartel (citizen), Chair
Roland Chaput (Redevelopment Board)
Bernice Jones (Park and Recreation Commission)
Patsy Kraemer (Department of Human Services)
Ann LeRoyer (citizen/Arlington Land Trust)
Alan McClennen, Jr. (Planning and Community Development Department)
Oakes Plimpton (citizen/Friends of Robbins Farm Park)
David White (Conservation Commission)
Open (Department of Public Works and Cemetery Commission)

Submitted January 15, 2002